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**Public needs to heighten awareness of dangers
of elevated TVs that are larger, heavier**

DALLAS – June 1, 2006 – Adults need to be better educated about television’s potential harm – not content or programming, but the physical danger of falling sets, according to a recent study at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

UT Southwestern pediatricians reviewed a year’s worth of emergency department cases involving children injured by television sets toppling over, usually because of climbing toddlers or someone accidentally knocking over the TV. Their findings, available online, appear in the June issue of the journal *Academic Emergency Medicine*.

“Our data indicated a lack of parental awareness and an absence of primary prevention as a root cause for this problem,” said Dr. Floyd Ota, assistant professor of pediatrics at UT Southwestern and lead author of the study.

More than 98 percent of homes in America have at least one television and one household out of every four purchases a new model each year, according to the Consumer Electronics Association. That turnover pattern, the UT Southwestern researchers noted, leads to unfamiliarity with issues like size, required safe clearance and weight distribution.

“The majority of the weight is placed toward the front of the unit,” Dr. Ota said. “If the television is not placed on a stable display area, or if the display area is not secured, the imbalanced weight distribution increases the potential for toppling forward.”

The researchers found that although injuries usually aren’t severe, the potential for tragedy exists, so adults need to be made more aware and take better precautions. Eighty-five percent of parents interviewed for the study said they weren’t aware of the potential danger.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission estimated that 2,300 children annually visit emergency rooms for injuries due to falling TVs. Previous studies suggest this in-home hazard may be on the rise.

The UT Southwestern study, in which researchers attempted to identify methods for prevention, is believed to be the first in which researchers personally surveyed parents about the circumstances surrounding their child’s injuries.

The study calls for manufacturers to make available or include an inexpensive furniture securing device such as a strap, and to add labels warning of the potential danger of units toppling.

A public awareness campaign also is needed, according to the research team. A similar

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Elevated TV dangers – 2

awareness campaign involving injuries from toppling vending machines resulted in more units being secured to floors and walls, the researchers noted.

“More aggressive education to warn parents about the risk of injury must be implemented so that more families will take the time to display their televisions safely,” said study author Dr. Robert Todd Maxson, assistant professor of pediatric surgery who specializes in pediatric trauma prevention.

Researchers reviewed 26 cases handled by the Children’s Medical Center Dallas emergency department between November 2003 and October 2004. The children injured by falling TVs ranged in age from 1 to 7 years old.

Some of their findings included:

- Nine children were hospitalized, including two in the intensive care unit. Fourteen suffered head injuries and nine injured an arm or leg. More than one-third of cases were admitted to the hospital for stays ranging from one to four days, while the rest were treated and discharged. One case required surgery for a large facial cut.
- Televisions with 20- to 30-inch screens were most commonly involved, making up 65 percent of cases. TVs 19 inches or smaller made up less than a fifth of the cases and screens of between 30 and 40 inches were about 16 percent of cases.
- Eighty-five percent of the TVs toppled were situated between two and five feet from the floor.
- About three out of every four parents questioned said the child was or may have been climbing on the furniture when the accident occurred; the other quarter reported that the TV was knocked off the stand by another person.
- All but one of the injuries occurred at home. The other occurred during a church function. Parents reported witnessing the injuries in slightly less than half the cases.

Also involved in the study was Dr. Pamela Okada, assistant professor of pediatrics and senior author.

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